

Parties of Britain today could drop pretty well all other political principles and share a philosophy based on two points, the Welfare State and anti-Communism. Whether that would enable them to emulate the successes and satisfactions of Victorian days is, of course, a matter of individual opinion. At least this could be said, it would make for that continuity in foreign policy which in some quarters is regarded as so desirable. . .

Both parties, apparently here as in Great Britain, are agreed on the broad pattern of defence strategy, and under Eden, Butler, Attlee, or even Bevan, there's little likelihood that this would be changed. The defence policy of the Commonwealth was obviously discussed at the Prime Ministers' Conference . . . and a new role has been assigned to New Zealand—evidenced by the proposal to send forces to Malaya. I've listened carefully to the debate about this in Parliament during the week, and it seems to me that most speakers missed the essential point, or at any rate, refrained from referring to it. New Zealanders are not going there to root out the "bandits" or "terrorists" as they are called. As Mr. Nash said, there are already 350,000 men in Malaya trying to capture 5000 rebels, and a few hundred more from New Zealand—and the Australians, too, as announced yesterday—wouldn't make much difference either way. We're to be there, I believe, to take up the position we'll have to fight from if the war regarded by the service chiefs as most likely to happen should break out.

I'm going to guess that one of the decisions taken at the recent Seato Conference was to regard the whole of the South-East Asian continent down as far as the Kra Isthmus as undefendable, or at least temporarily expendable. This notwithstanding the fact that Siam was host to the conference and Bangkok has been named for its secretariat. But, flanked as it is by Indo-China, I think the Americans have decided to write off Thailand, at least for the time being. . . In these circumstances I believe she will prefer to retire to Malaya, there to organise part of what Mr. Dulles called "massive retaliation with weapons of her own choosing."

And that's where we come in, as one of the weapons of Mr. Dulles' choosing, and I must concede with the Anzus Pact from our choosing, too. Within the last 20 years the cockpit of New Zealand has moved from Western Europe through the Middle East to the North Pacific. With this decision we move right into the cold war. If it suddenly fanned into heat some of our men in Malaya would probably get burnt, and once that happened it would be very difficult to argue rationally in Parliament or elsewhere what we ought to do about it. What's now written in ink, with constitutional safeguards, in the Manila Pact, would then be written, unconditionally, in blood.

—DR. A. M. FINLAY,
April 2, 1955.

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